

# The One Mediator: Jesus Christ



**Thrust Statement:** The Cross of Jesus is the Divine act of reconciliation for sinful men and women.

**Scripture Reading:** [1 Timothy 2: 5-6](#)

One cannot reflect upon Christ as the One mediator (μεσιςτις mesiths) between God and humanity without a consciousness that the Cross of Jesus is the sign of the Christian faith and of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The words “He was pierced for our transgressions” ([Isaiah 53:5](#)) are the whole foundation upon which Christianity stands. It is this truth that makes Christianity distinctive from all other religions in the world. The message of the Cross is the central mystery of the Gospel of God ([Ephesians 1:3-14](#)). Paul, in writing to Timothy, says: “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time” ([1 Timothy 2:5-6](#)).<sup>[1]</sup>

Paul, in his Epistles to the Ephesians, sought to explain this mystery of God—the One mediator between God and men—so that men and women might find hope. For the believer, the Cross is the divine act of reconciliation for sinful men and women. At the Cross of Jesus, one observes that the intellectual and moral pride of one trying to earn his or her salvation is finally broken in Him. Unless one understands the significance of the Cross of Jesus, one will never have the security of eternal life. The Cross of Jesus is a constant reminder of salvation by grace through faith. Paul tackles this priceless and glorious truth in his Ephesian Epistle as he seeks to unfold this mystery of God that had been hidden from ages past:

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, <sup>15</sup> by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup> and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility ([Ephesians 2:14-16](#)).

Jesus, the Mediator, is “our peace.” It is through Jesus that God reconciles both Jew and Gentile unto Himself through the Cross. In the Cross of Jesus, one observes an actual objective transaction in the redemption of humanity. God does something that is absolutely essential for the salvation of both men and women. The starting point of Christianity is that God meets us in and through Jesus. Paul brings this truth home when he writes his second Epistle to the Corinthians: “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:19). God reveals Himself in Christ, the Mediator between God and humanity. Timothy and Barbara Friberg and Neva Miller define, according to the Greek text, the word *mediator* as follows:

Μεσιτῆρῃ (Mesiths), ου (ou), ος (&o) basically, a neutral and trusted person in the middle (μεσος *mesos*); (1) one who works to remove disagreement *mediator, go-between, reconciler* (1T 2.5); (2) one who provides a guarantee of fulfillment of contracted obligation *mediator* (HE 9.15).<sup>[2]</sup>

The words *mediator* or *arbitrator* speak of one who mediates between two parties to remove a disagreement or to reach a common goal. The world religions do not accept Jesus as the Mediator between God and humanity. In a perusal of the world religions, one discovers that even though some accept belief in God, yet, at the same time, they deny the death of Jesus upon the Cross as a reconciling sacrifice. The message of Jesus Christ is incomprehensible to the world at large. Jesus came to deal with sin that affects man as well as God. When one violates God’s Law, God’s glory is at stake. Sin is an infringement of His glory. God’s holiness is at stake. Thus, God’s Divine punishment also proceeds from His holiness. One cannot rebel against God’s Law with impunity.

God’s holiness demands His wrath against sin. The Divine wrath of God must punish the sinner. Since everyone is guilty before God, this means that everyone falls under Divine condemnation. It is impossible for individuals to escape the consequences of his or her own actions on his or her own terms. One cannot pardon himself or herself. One’s guilt is an inescapable necessity of punishment. God must maintain His holiness. The only way God could be just and, at the same time, the justifier of sinful humanity was/is through the atonement of Jesus Christ who paid the penalty for the violation of God’s holiness. The biblical doctrine of the atonement (Christ dying upon the Cross) cannot be understood apart from the idea of God’s holiness, His Divine wrath, and His Divine righteousness in punishment.

Whenever one confronts the Mediator (Jesus Christ) at the Cross, one perceives the Divine will to forgive, His holiness, and His wrath. The Cross of Jesus paints a picture of God’s character—His wrath, His punishment, His love, and His forgiveness. The Cross of Christ is the place where one meets the loving, merciful, and forgiving God. It is in and through the Cross that one perceives God in all His holiness. A debt must be paid that lies outside all human possibilities. The death of Jesus is the cost and the price for humanity’s sinfulness. In the death of Jesus one is confronted with the revelation of God’s grace, the reality of His wrath, and the necessity of punishment for an affront against His holiness. In the Cross one is confronted with a paradox—God’s wrath and His Divine love that blots out the sins of those who put their faith and trust in the One Mediator, Jesus Christ, between God and man. This action of wrath and of love on the part of God is as big a mystery as is the mystery of the Triune God.

It is only in the Cross that the absolute holiness of God and His absolute mercy meet. Both God's holiness and God's mercy meet at the foot of the Cross. It is in the Cross that Law and love are brought together. Is it any wonder that Paul could write: "When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God."<sup>e</sup> <sup>2</sup> For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (**1 Corinthians 2:1-2**). It is in and through the Mediator that God descends and runs, as it were, after sinful humanity. As one approaches God through the Mediator, one is stripped completely naked of any goodness or works upon which one can stand before God justified; it is all of God.

Forgiveness cannot be subjective, that is to say, forgiveness is not just a matter of speaking; for example, God said, "Let there be light,' and there was light" (**Genesis 1:3**). Forgiveness is not that easy, since sin is an affront to God's holiness. In Christianity, forgiveness is concretized in an historical event—the incarnation. It is in this vein that John writes: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only,<sup>d</sup> who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (**John 1:14**). There is a necessity of an objective atonement, not a subjective atonement. Paul develops this concept in his Roman Epistle. As he seeks to unfold salvation by grace through faith, he defends the necessity of an objective atonement in and through the incarnation of Christ:

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. <sup>22</sup> This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. <sup>25</sup> God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement,<sup>a</sup> through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— <sup>26</sup> he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus (**Romans 3:21-26**).

It is only in Christ that one is able to perceive the burden of guilt. God has revealed the forgiveness of sin in and through Jesus. John the Baptist expresses this truth with the following words: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (**John 1:29**)! It is through the sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross that sin is taken away (**Isaiah 53**). Guilt is too great to be removed through simple forgiveness—"I forgive you." Before forgiveness can take place with God, something else must happen before forgiveness can become possible. The biblical doctrine of forgiveness is based upon the Atonement of Christ. Forgiveness of sins cannot be received through knowledge, exercise of the will, or through ritual acts, but only through the Jesus Christ. The Cross of Jesus is the sign of this revelation of forgiveness. Mark, in his Gospel, records the following words of Jesus to His disciples: "**For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many**" (**Mark 10:45**).

The reconciling revelation of God is the Mediator. This unique event—Incarnation—in history is none other than the eternal God who is beyond and above time. God takes the initiative (**John 3:16**); Christ humbles Himself (**Philippians 2:5-11**). One

cannot look upon the Cross without a consciousness that God really comes to sinful humanity. The very essence of the Christian faith is to believe that in no one else is salvation (**Acts 4:12**); salvation can only be found in the One who is Mediator between God and humanity. This coming of Jesus breaks down the barriers that are opposed to forgiveness. It is only in Him that one can truly understand the Father as the God of love. It is only in and through Jesus that one can come to understand the phrase “guilt of sin” and the phrase “the forgiving love of God.”

As one glances over time with the eye of faith and looks upon the Cross, one is immediately conscious that the Cross signifies substitutionary atonement. It is only through the Mediator that there is communing with the Divine life (**John 14:6**). It is through the miracle of divine revelation that God reveals His desire to have communion with both men and women. God wants communion with Dallas Burdette; God wants communion with Raymond Miller; God wants communion with Tim Bowen; God wants communion with Alton Bailey; in fact, God wants communion with every individual. Even before this universe was spoken into existence, God, according to Paul, “Chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight” (**Ephesian 1:4**). How does one become a part of God’s elect? Again, Paul zeros in on the essential fact that brings about this status: “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit” (**1:13**).

Without belief in the Mediator,<sup>[3]</sup> one cannot have communion with God. God wants to have communion with me; God wants to have communion with you. The Mediator’s approach to humanity is not simply human solidarity, but rather the blending of the Divine and human in His Incarnation. His coming is the most unique event in the annals of the world. One observes in the blending of the Divine and the human elements in redemption the means whereby God justifies sinful humanity. The death of Jesus is an integral part of His vocation (**Mark 10:45; 8:31**). In the death of Jesus, one does not simply view death in the universal human sense but in the theocratic sense. In other words, it is the suffering of the Messiah, that is to say, the suffering of the Person—the God/Man—who can be none other than Himself—God become flesh (**John 1:1-14**). The vicarious offering (substitution for another) is something entirely personal. It is personal in the sense that this atonement sets forth the personality of the Mediator—One who acts vicariously<sup>[4]</sup> for both man and God.

What does it mean to say that the Mediator acts vicariously for both man and God? God’s nature is revealed in His Son (**John 14:6-9**). It is in Jesus that the love of God breaks through His wrath. It is only in Christ that God can extend His love without endangering His holiness (**Romans 3:21-26**). In Jesus one witnesses the revealed love of God. It is only in Christ that one experiences the forgiveness of sins (**Colossians 1:14**). One who does not believe in Jesus is under God’s wrath (**John 3:18**). The very essence of the Christian faith is to believe that salvation is found in no one else (**Acts 4:12**). It is also essential to believe that this suffering of the Messiah upon the Cross as an atonement happened only once (**Hebrews 9:26**). God takes the initiative in the salvation of humanity (**John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:17-19**). It is in the Cross that God comes to humanity. There is a sense in which one might say that the Cross is the total expression of His life.

Jesus is the only One who can reconcile humanity to God. How? In the

Incarnation, Jesus identifies Himself wholly with man, but, at the same time, He is absolutely united to God (**John 1:1-3**). He is the only One to whom this task of redemption could be assigned. Why? The answer is found in the fact that Jesus is God, the Unique Savior. Since Jesus is one with God, this constitutes the basis of His solidarity with man (**Hebrew 2:14-18; 1 John 4:9-10; 1 Timothy 3:16**). Without the Mediator, one is not stripped entirely naked. One does not sense the guilt of sin. Christianity is unlike the religions of the world. In Christianity, God descends and runs after humanity. One can never deal with guilt apart from the intervention of God—sending His Son for the sins of the world.

Since sin is an injury done to God Himself, God provides the expiatory sacrifice, not man. If one rejects the idea of God's wrath, one must of necessity reject His love. The world, as a whole, recognizes the need for expiatory sacrifice. Until one recognizes that he or she stands naked before God, one will not seek God's forgiveness through His Mediator. Since humanity rebelled against God, God offered a divine sacrifice that is offered only once—His Son (**Hebrew 9:26**). One cannot live without God, but one cannot live with God so long as one's guilt is not atoned for, that is to say, expiated through the Cross of Christ (**Romans 3:9-23**). One cannot stand in the presence of God's holiness without a change of garments—the righteousness of God. God's wisdom consists in the means whereby He could accomplish the impossible, so it seemed to mortal man and the angels. Paul describes God's wisdom of redemption this way:

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord”<sup>b</sup>—(**1 Corinthians 1:30-31**).

God alone can make this sacrifice. It is God who does it. It is God who suffers. It is God who takes the burden upon Himself. Sin is no illusion. Wrath is no illusion. In the New Testament, one discovers that the Cross of Christ is the self-offering of God. God alone is the One who can “cover” sin as though it had never been. It is God who takes everything upon Himself. Since God is holy, something must take place in order that the past may be completely obliterated. This disharmony cannot simply be removed by God's love, because the love of God is holy. God is not only the Merciful One, but He is also the Holy One. In the sacrifice of Jesus, one sees the mercy and holiness of God expressed in all its fullness. In the crucifixion of Jesus, one witnesses an historical event—a real concrete historical event. Whoever rejects the Atonement of Christ remains severed from the God of love. In the Gospel of God, one observes the gulf between humanity and God removed. In the Gospel, one observes a real movement—an event that shows the seriousness of humanity's condition and the unspeakable wonder of God's love.

## CONCLUSION

This self-movement of God began before the creation of the world (**Ephesians 1:4**). This is the theme of the Old Testament from beginning to end (**Luke 24:44-49**). The Mediator that Paul speaks of in his **First Epistle to Timothy (2:5-6)** is the One that the Prophets foretold. Jesus came in order to deliver those who put their faith in Him. Without Jesus, one is still under God's wrath. This disposition of God's wrath was/is caused by the rupture of communion with Him through sin. God takes sin seriously. “God cannot be mocked,” writes the apostle Paul (**Galatians 6:7**). As a result of humanity's attitude



toward sin, this action produced a change in God's attitude toward sinful humanity. If God had not taken action against rebellion, this unconcern would indicate that God does not love. In other words, God's unconcern would mean that God is mocked. If God had not taken His own command and will seriously, this would indicate that God is not unyielding, unbendable, and not reliable. The wrath of God is God taking Himself seriously and humanity seriously. The wrath of God is a necessary expression of God's reaction to revolt.

The one who refuses to entertain God's wrath, God's judgment, and God's condemnation will never take Jesus the Mediator seriously. Out of God's holiness springs His wrath. Out of God's holiness comes the necessity of judgment and punishment for one who turns his back upon Him. It is only in and through Jesus that the breach can be restored between God and humanity. Jesus views His whole life as a divine act of forgiveness: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (**Luke 19:10**). The last phase of the Incarnation is found in the Cross of Christ and the message of atonement in and through Jesus. The Cross demonstrates to sinners the holiness of God together with His mercy. Guilt is a reality even for God. God reacted to this guilt by sending Jesus as the Mediator, the Savior of the world. In the Philippian letter, Paul reveals God's coming down to man in the Incarnation. One can say that God's wrath is an effect of His holiness. It is God's love that leads to the Cross of the Savior.

If one wishes eternal life, one must overcome self-righteousness. This kind of mentality can only be overcome through the message of reconciling death of Jesus upon Calvary. The doctrine of the Cross and justification by faith is the very heart of the message of salvation. One can only live by God's grace, not one's own works of righteousness. Do you want forgiveness? Do you want a relationship with God? Do you want eternal life? If so, this can only be found in Jesus, God's Mediator between God and men. It is in Jesus that one observes the coming of the kingdom of God and of a new covenant, a covenant in which God will not remember sins any longer (**Jeremiah 31:31-34**). As you reflect upon the Cross, do you stand in awe of God's matchless love, His unfathomable mercy, and His perfect holiness? Are you willing to accept Jesus as God's Mediator? Jeremiah tells the "fact" of forgiveness, but Paul tells the "how" of forgiveness (**Romans 3:21-26**).

In conclusion, the following Scripture citations are given to call attention to the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ in His bridging the gap between God and humanity:

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,<sup>6</sup> who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.<sup>7</sup> And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles (**1 Timothy 2:5-7**).

But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises (**Hebrews 8:6**).

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant (**Hebrews 9:15**).

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly,<sup>23</sup> to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect,<sup>24</sup> to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel (**Hebrews 12:22-24**). Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.<sup>2</sup> For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.<sup>3</sup> Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.<sup>4</sup> Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes (**Romans 10:1-4**).

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<sup>[1]</sup> All Scripture citations are from the *New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984), unless stated otherwise.

<sup>[2]</sup> Friberg, Timothy, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller. Vol. 4, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. Baker's Greek New Testament library (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000), 259.

c Some manuscripts as *I proclaimed to you God's mystery*

d Or *the Only Begotten*

a 25 Or *as the one who would turn aside his wrath, taking away sin*

<sup>[3]</sup> One who mediates, especially one who serves as an intermediary to reconcile differences.

<sup>[4]</sup> Acting in place of someone or something else.

b Jer. 9:24